C'dale Clergy Concerned

By JOHN M. HART JR.

Members of Carbondale's clergy met with community leaders and City Council Wednesday night to discuss problems in what one participant called the "quality" of police protection in the Pioneer City.

Rev. Claude Pullis of the Berean Baptist Church would not comment on the specifics of the meeting but said the session dealt with "the quality of police protection."

The minister said the clergy has been meeting on the police department question since mid October stressing the clergy has, "a concern there is not adequate police protection."

Councilman James McMyne said the meeting resolved nothing and stressed the police department is understaffed for economic reasons.

McMyne questioned whether the city can afford a larger police department and asked, "Are we mistaking quantity for quality?"

The veteran councilman said that when the population of the city was over 20,000, the city had approximately 18 police officers. He said the force today consists of 13 members.

The councilman failed to mention, however, that three of the 13 are on sick leave; that one is the chief of police and another is a detective doubling as a juvenile officer, a police official said.

The hardship on the force leaves only two shift commanders and six patrolmen to fill three shifts seven days a week.

McMyne noted that with the shortage in full-time manpower, the city has been forced to rely on reserve or "special" uniform men.

Asked whether the city ever considered joining the Lackawanna County Communications Center and in the process free one man per shift from desk duty, McMyne said he proposed such a move but was rebuffed on several fronts.

He said former Police Chief Paul Kelly led a successful campaign to keep the city out of the then newly formed communications center.

Carbondale's failure to enter the countywide dispatching system did much to help smaller surrounding communities such as Fell Twp., Forest City, Vandling and Carbondale Twp. since these municipalities today rely on the police desk in Carbondale to handle their communications needs.

With Quality of Police Care

McMyne, who once served as mayor of Carbondale, said he also proposed having the paid fire drivers man police and ambulance phones but confessed there were many problems, "especially with the unions" regarding that plan.

The councilman conceded that the clergy's position of having additional officers is good but again returned to the biggest problem facing the aging municipality — financing.

"It would be great to have 1.5 policemen for every thousand people. Using that we should have 16 or 17. But when you figure in benefits and fringes, how are we going to afford such a force?" he asked.

Taking part in Wednesday's session in addition to Rev. Pullis and McMyne were Rev. Charles Starzer of the First Presbyterian Church, Councilmembers Charlotte Moro, Abe Calzola, Frank Grecco, Michael Tolerico, and Dr. Thomas Coleman, Joseph Carney, Oliver Shifler, Dr. Salvatore Pettinato and Mrs. Harry Singer.

Francis X. Dottle, the police chief, was not available for comment nor was Joseph Masco, the city administrator. And Mayor Fred Mancuso, who did not attend the session, has an unpublished telephone number.

In the borough of Dunmore, which has a population slightly larger than that of Carbondale, the citizenry is protected by a 21-man police force. The force there consists of 11 patrolmen and 10 officers, including Chief Frank Occulto and Det. Lee Mecca.

Chief Occulto said his force has lost four men in the past five years and the shortage has prompted his department to eliminate the position of juvenile officer. "We had to put the juvenile officer back into uniform because we just couldn't afford that luxury," he said.

The Dunmore chief noted that they have a dual communications system taking in both their own and the county communications center.

He said in the event of an emergency where the desk man is forced to leave police headquarters, a borough full-time fireman is dispatched from fire headquarters to man the desk in the policeman's absence.